

DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

JR. WEEKLY JR.

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 295.

Price, Five Cents.

DIAMOND DICK JR.'S MIND READER

OR
FIGHTING AN ALL-STAR COMBINATION



DIAMOND DICK, JR., CAUGHT WHOOPING ANDY BY THE LEG, AND THE BANK THIEF AND ALL-AROUND BAD MAN TURNED A COMPLETE SOMERSAULT.

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Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1902, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.

No. 295.

NEW YORK, June 7, 1902.

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Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Mind Reader;

OR,

FIGHTING AN ALL-STAR COMBINATION.

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

THE ALL-STAR IN A MIX-UP.

"Pardon me, sir, but are you Diamond Dick, Jr.?"

The *Texas Belle* was steaming up Buffalo Bayou, en route from Galveston to Houston.

It is only fifty miles between the two points, but as the bayou does not average forty yards in width and is as crooked as the letter S, it usually took the *Texas Belle* some ten hours to make the trip.

The little steamer had covered about half the distance to Houston when a man in a long linen duster approached a young fellow who had his chair tilted back against the rail and was reflectively smoking, and voiced the question that opens this chapter.

"That's my name," replied the youth, looking up.

The man in the linen duster dropped in a chair beside him and went on, in a low tone:

"Did you hear of the big robbery in Galveston a few days ago?"

"You mean the robbery of the Consolidated National?"

"Yes."

"I heard of it. The thieves got away with some fifty thousand dollars."

"They haven't got away with it, yet."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll be plain with you, Diamond Dick, Jr. I am a detective and have been working on the bank robbery case. I followed one of the men, whom I believed to be connected with the robbery, upon this boat. I have since learned that my suspicions of the fellow are correct. An hour after leaving Galveston

he met three other men in the cabin, and I am satisfied that that is the all-star combination that worked the robbery."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to arrest them. As they are all desperate fellows, however, and as I have heard considerable about you, I want you to help me. It will be two of us against four, but I do not know of any one else on the boat on whom I could depend."

"We two are enough," returned Diamond Dick, Jr. "Where are the men?"

"They are coming this way from the end of the boat now. The four men with derby hats."

Bertie looked at the quartet.

To his experienced eye they certainly had every appearance of being desperate and successful crooks.

As they reached the stairway leading to the upper deck the four separated, two of them going upstairs.

"That's bad," muttered the detective.

"Not at all," replied Bertie. "I'll follow the two who went to the upper deck."

"Wouldn't it be better if we gave our attention to these two fellows first?"

"There might be trouble, and the other two would take alarm, and, possibly, give us the slip."

"Very well. If you'll bag those fellows I'll take care of these."

Bertie started upstairs.

The two crooks he was after had gone up to the pilot house and the youth followed.

He had barely lifted his head above the pilot house deck when an exciting scene met his eyes.

On this deck passengers were not allowed, and the two crooks, with drawn revolvers in their hands, were covering the man in the pilot house.

"Not a word above a whisper, on your life!" said one of the crooks.

"What do you want?" returned the pilot, in a low voice.

"Shut up, and do what we tell you. Do you see that big oak, yonder, with the branch jutting out over the water?"

The pilot nodded.

"Is there plenty of water under that branch, so you can run under it?"

The pilot nodded again.

"Then do so."

Still standing on the ladder, Diamond Dick, Jr., drew his revolvers, rested his elbows on the deck, and took deliberate aim at the crooks.

"He will do nothing of the kind!" said Diamond Dick, Jr., sharply.

The crooks turned about hastily.

"Who are you?" queried one of them.

Before Bertie could reply the pilot had taken advantage of the fact that the men's faces were turned temporarily from him and had sprang through one of the open windows of the pilot house.

An instant later his fingers were twined about the neck of the crook nearest him, and they were engaged in a terrific struggle.

Springing upon the deck, Bertie started for the other man.

"You're my prisoner!" he cried.

"Not much!" replied the man; and then, reckless of consequences, he leaped at Diamond Dick, Jr., with the ferocity of a tiger.

Bertie dropped his revolvers and caught the man about the neck.

A moment later they fell to the deck and rolled over and over toward the edge.

Another instant and they would have rolled off and dropped into the water had not Bertie checked himself by an exertion of all his strength.

Tearing himself free from his antagonist's grasp, he leaped to his feet.

The bank robber also sprang up. He had a knife in his hand and made a vicious lunge at the youth.

With a lightning-like movement, Diamond Dick, Jr., knocked the knife aside and dealt the man a stunning blow under the ear.

He fell like a log.

"Help!" cried the pilot.

Bertie whirled about and faced in the direction from which the call proceeded.

He discovered that the pilot had under-estimated

the strength and prowess of his adversary, for the latter had pinned the boatman to the deck and was making hurried and determined preparations for "settling" him for good and all.

Without losing a moment's time, our hero bounded to the rescue and the pilot's antagonist was soon put where he could do no damage.

"I'd like to know what those fellows mean by this business," panted the pilot, as he climbed back into the pilot house and caught the wheel.

"Have you a piece of rope handy?" asked Bertie.

"There you are," returned the pilot, tossing him a small coil of tarred rope.

Bertie used it to secure the captured bank robber.

He then turned to the spot where he had left the other thief, stunned and unconscious.

To his surprise, the man had disappeared.

Where had he gone?

Bertie gave a quick look about him and decided that the robber must have recovered his wits and dashed down to the lower deck.

Without pausing to explain to the pilot what he was about, the youth sprang down the ladder.

The captain of the boat had just got it through his head that something was the matter, and had started for the upper deck.

Bertie, as he came down, collided with him.

"What's up?" queried the captain. "What has happened?"

"Look here," said Bertie, clutching the collar of the skipper's coat and hissing the words into his ear, "don't you let on as though anything had happened. I've got a prisoner on the upper deck and I want him to remain there until we reach Houston. Don't you raise any commotion, but go up this ladder and the pilot will tell you all about it."

The captain looked after Bertie in amazement until he disappeared in the throng of passengers; then he made his way up the ladder.

Bertie's search for the missing thief was indefatigable, but in vain.

The fellow seemed to have disappeared from the boat.

There was another thing our hero was at a loss to account for. He was unable to find any trace of the other two men in derby hats or of the man in the linen duster.

His search was thorough, and, at last, baffled and puzzled, he made his way up to the pilot house.

The captain stood by one of the little windows talking with the pilot.

"Are you a detective?" asked the captain.

"No," replied Bertie.

"The pilot tells me you put up a pretty good fight. Who is that fellow on the deck there?"

"A bank thief."

"The deuce!"

"There were three others on this boat. Was there any disturbance downstairs a little while ago?"

"Nothing unusual."

"No one jumped from the boat and swam ashore?"

"Not that I know of."

Bertie was silent for a moment; then he asked:

"How long before we reach Houston?"

"Half an hour."

"When we get there, captain, I want you to have the prisoner carted to the jail. Will you do it?"

"Yes."

Bertie went downstairs again and made another search for the detective and the missing robbers.

As he was walking back and forth, his sharp eyes taking in the face of every passenger, a man with a sanctimonious expression of face, and wearing a long, black coat came out of the cabin.

He held conspicuously in his hand a small pocket Bible and was evidently a clergyman.

Bertie was greatly surprised at the sight of this man.

He had not seen him during his previous search, and he wondered how such a peculiar-looking man could have escaped his notice.

The clerical-looking man walked on past our hero and took a seat in the stern of the boat.

While they were drawing up at the wharf in Houston the passengers crowded to the side of the boat from which a landing was to be effected, and Bertie,

happening to glance up, saw the sanctimonious-looking man gazing squarely at him.

The fellow's eyes were turned away instantly as they met Bertie's, but not before our hero had had a flash that convinced him that this man was none other than the bank robber who had escaped him on the upper deck.

The thief's disguise was well-nigh perfect.

Bertie endeavored to work his way toward the crook, but the crowd was so thick he found this impossible.

He kept a vigilant eye on the man, however, as the passengers began surging across the landing-plank to the wharf.

As the crowd thinned out upon reaching shore, the youth felt that he would be able to effect a capture.

The crook was some distance ahead, and was halfway across the plank before Bertie stepped on it.

On reaching the pier the crook quickened his steps almost to a run, signaling a passing cab with the umbrella he carried.

It was some time before Bertie could shake himself free of the crowd.

When he was finally able to do so, the man he was following was disappearing down the street in the cab.

Bertie looked about for another vehicle in which to follow him.

There was none in sight.

Beside the curb stood a telegraph messenger boy, leaning on a bicycle.

"What's your name?" asked Bertie, running up to the boy.

"George Walton," answered the boy, astonished at our hero's abrupt manner.

"I want to borrow your bicycle," went on Bertie, hurriedly. "I will return it to you at the telegraph office. In the meantime, to assure you of my good intentions, here's a hundred-dollar bill. When I return the wheel you may give me back eighty of it, keeping twenty for the rental."

"But——" began the boy.

Bertie had no time to wait for him to finish, so he

sprang on the wheel and dashed away at a scorching pace.

"I'll capture that bogus preacher," he muttered, "or know the reason why!"

CHAPTER II.

THE SAFE-DEPOSIT VAULT.

The man in the carriage was evidently aware that he was being followed, for the vehicle doubled this way and that along cross streets for the purpose, undoubtedly, of throwing Bertie off the track.

The youth, however, was a good cyclist, and this was by no means his first experience in "shadowing."

Finding it impossible to escape him, the carriage at last drew up at the curb, the crook leaped out, and the carriage drove off.

The clergyman whirled about, saw Diamond Dick, Jr., pedaling toward him, and then turned and ran down a flight of stone steps into a basement.

After leaning his bicycle against a lamp-post, Bertie followed.

Above the basement doors, in gilt letters, were the words: "Metropolitan Safety-Deposit Vaults."

Passing into the basement, the youth was confronted by three grated walls.

In front of him was an electric bell. He pressed it and waited.

At least two minutes passed, and his summons was not answered. Again he pressed the bell, with no better results than he had had the first time.

Could it be possible that the proprietors of the vaults were using this means to help the crook escape?

The third time Bertie put his finger against the little rubber button the iron door in front of him was thrown open and a gray-haired man, wearing a uniform and the star of a special policeman, stepped to one side for him to enter.

Bertie went in.

The crook was standing at a counter, but upon catching sight of Bertie he hurried rapidly across the

stone floor and vanished within a corridor, a grated door clanging shut behind him.

Without pausing to give a word of explanation, Diamond Dick, Jr., followed the fleeing man.

Turning the knob of the grated door, he entered the corridor, just as the crook disappeared through a door at the other end.

Bertie hurried after him; but in spite of all his efforts, he could not open the last door through which his man had gone.

"Hello, there!" shouted Bertie.

"What is it?" queried the man with the star, appearing on the other side of the door by which Bertie had entered the corridor.

"Open this door for me!"

"Why?" was the deliberate query.

"Can't you see why?" retorted Bertie. "That man will get away from me."

"Of course he'll get away from you."

"Upon my soul, you talk as though you wanted him to."

"So I do. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for hounding about such a good man as Elder Wiggins."

Bertie could hardly believe his ears.

Coming back to the first door, he looked through the gratings at the man with the star.

"Do you think that fellow is a clergyman?"

"I know he is."

"Well, you're away off in your reckoning, but I haven't any time to explain the situation now. That man will get away from me if I don't take right after him."

Bertie sought to push open the door and go out.

To his surprise, he was not able to open the door from the inside.

"No use," said the man with the star.

"Let me out."

"I will, in about fifteen minutes."

Bertie's hand wandered toward his pistol pocket, but he did not draw his weapon, for he knew that such a demonstration would be useless.

"What right have you to keep me shut up here?"

"The moral right to save a good man like Elder Wiggins the society of a crook of your caliber."

Bertie stared at the man in uniform and then gave vent to a low laugh.

"That fellow must have thrown you into a trance," said he. "What did he tell you?"

"He told us all about how you were trying to blackmail him. We would turn you over to the police without any further words had not the elder especially requested that we do not do so."

"Who is this elder?"

"He is a noted divine, and lives in Galveston. He brought us a letter of introduction from the mayor of that city."

"What did he tell you about me?"

"Oh, he gave us a pretty good estimate of your character."

"But what did he say?" persisted Bertie.

"He told us how you had tried to sell him a gold brick, and failing in that, had tried to inveigle him into a game of cards——"

"That'll do," returned Bertie, who was beginning to feel a certain amount of admiration for the crook's gigantic nerve. "He has succeeded in pulling the wool over your eyes very beautifully. Why, he is no more a preacher than I am. He is a thief—a bank robber."

"Sir, you are adding insult to injury——"

"Well, well, say no more about it. Isn't it pretty near time you let me out of here?"

"Keep him there at least an hour, Thomas!" called a voice from the front of the office.

Hardly had the echoes of the voice died away when the door opened and some one entered.

Although Bertie could not see who the newcomer was, he could hear distinctly the conversation that took place.

"Good-morning," said the newcomer; "I am looking for a gentleman named Jones."

"That's me," replied the man behind the counter.

"My name is Wiggins, Reverend Isaac Wiggins. I come from Galveston, and, when I started from

there on the boat I had a letter of introduction to you from the mayor——”

“You elder Wiggins?” came the gasping query.

“Yes. As I was saying, when I left Galveston I had a letter of introduction to you from the mayor of the city. While on the boat, however, I fell in with a gentleman of rather doubtful appearance, and, although I hate to say it, I fully believe he stole that letter from me. What his purpose could have been I cannot fathom. As I shall probably soon receive a charge in this city I wish to rent a box in these vaults, and—— But what is the matter, sir?”

“Was this the letter you received from the mayor?”

“The identical one! How in the world has it managed to find its way into your possession?”

“We have made a most egregious blunder! Thomas, let that man out! We have been played for suckers in a way that makes my blood boil.”

“Played for suckers? I do not understand——”

“I will explain all in a few moments. Pray be seated, elder, be seated.”

As Thomas threw open the iron door Bertie hurried out, gave a glance at the neatly-dressed gentleman who was the real elder Wiggins and rushed out of the deposit vault and up the basement stairs.

The bogus elder was gone—and so was the messenger boy's bicycle!

Bertie felt a trifle savage.

“I ought to go back on the frontier,” he growled; “it begins to look as though these city crooks were too much for me.”

Hardly knowing what step he should take next, he started aimlessly along the street.

He had not proceeded many blocks when he saw his messenger boy spinning along the street on the same wheel he had rented of him a short time before.

“The boy must have followed me in some way,” thought Bertie, “and so gained possession of his bicycle when I left it to go into the deposit vault. Hello, there!” he called, hailing the boy.

Catching sight of Bertie, the messenger rode up to the walk.

“Is that the same wheel I rented of you a little while ago?”

“Yes. What did you turn it over to that preacher-looking chap for?”

“I didn't turn it over to him—he stole it.”

The messenger boy gave a long whistle.

“I thought there was a nigger in the fence somewhere.”

“What made you think that? Where did you see that ‘preacher-looking fellow?’ ”

“After you took my bicycle I started to deliver my message. It was for Bolter & Gordon, the undertakers. After they had signed for the message, I started out of the office. No sooner had I reached the door, however, than I saw this chap who looked like a preacher dash up to the door on my bike. Well, I was stumped. I thought the best way out of it was to jump on the wheel and make off, and that's what I did. Here's your hundred dollars, mister.”

Bertie took the bill and tendered the boy a twenty.

“That's too much.”

“I'm the best judge of that. Where are these undertakers' rooms?”

The boy directed him how to reach the undertaker's place of business, and then rode off.

“Now, once more,” muttered Bertie. “If I fail to catch him this time I'll have to admit that he's smarter than I am.”

CHAPTER III.

AT THE UNDERTAKERS'.

When Bertie reached Bolter & Gordon's place of business he found a long, black undertaker's wagon drawn up at the door.

A carriage was also in waiting.

As he entered the nicely-furnished office a little bell rang above the door.

The summons was not answered at once, and the youth sat down beside a table.

On the top of the table lay an opened telegram.

Bertie saw it and the glance he gave was sufficient to put him in possession of its contents, although he

had no wish or desire to discover what the message contained.

It read as follows:

"Messrs. Bolter & Gordon, Houston, Texas: Send body of Edward Sullivan to me at Giddings.

"M. SULLIVAN."

An instant later a dapper little gentleman entered the office from a rear apartment.

"Are you one of the proprietors?" queried Bertie.

"Yes, sir—Bolter's my name. What can I do for you, sir?"

"A man with a sanctimonious face and clerical-looking clothes came in here a short time ago. I want to find him. Is he here now?"

Bolter rubbed his chin.

"Sanctimonious face, clerical clothes," he murmured. "Ah, you must mean the Reverend Mr. Wiggins."

"That's the fellow."

"No, he isn't here."

"Did you see him go out?"

"See him go out, my dear sir? No, sir, I did not see him go out, but if he isn't here now he must have gone out."

"You are sure he isn't here?"

"Positive."

"May I look in the rear rooms?"

"It would be useless."

"Perhaps; but I would like to look, all the same."

"Mrs. Sullivan and her daughter are back there. We are just boxing up Mr. Sullivan for shipment to Giddings. It would be very painful for them, perhaps, to have you hunting around in there just now. Can't you put it off? Really, sir, I cannot understand why you should think the Reverend Mr. Wiggins is hiding about our establishment."

"I have my reasons and I must look, now. If you will not allow me, I will call in a policeman and do it anyway."

"Don't call in any policeman, sir. That would certainly shock Mrs. Sullivan's nerves, and the poor lady has all she can stagger under. I'll tell you—let

me remove the body to the wagon and then you can look to your heart's content."

"Very well."

The undertaker went back into the rear.

After a short interval the rear door was again opened and four men came out carrying a long wooden box which undoubtedly contained all that was mortal of the late Mr. Sullivan.

Following the box came two ladies, heavily veiled.

As the box passed him, Bertie saw that upon it was pasted a doctor's certificate and the address, "M. Sullivan, Giddings, Texas."

The box was placed in the undertaker's wagon and the ladies got into the carriage.

Both vehicles then drove away.

"They are in ample time for the train," remarked Mr. Bolter, coming in again, "and now, sir, if you will step this way you may do all the searching you wish to do."

Bertie went into the rear room.

Caskets, with their covers on, were standing up in rows around the walls.

"Besides the office, this is the only other room we have," said Bolter. "You see, it is quite impossible for anybody to hide here—admitting for the sake of argument, that the Reverend Mr. Wiggins would want to hide. I cannot imagine, sir, why you should think so badly of that respectable gentleman."

"Because that respectable gentleman is not a minister, but a bank thief."

"Bank thief? Impossible!"

"It's not impossible, but the truth. You'll have to take my word for it, as I am not going to enter into any explanations. If you do not see fit to help me in my search I will call in the police department."

"Don't do that! My dear sir, can you not see that there is no possible place for a person to hide?"

"Are those coffins all empty?"

"Certainly."

"Open them one after the other and let me see."

Bolter evidently thought this a useless piece of work, but, nevertheless, he went at it.

One by one the coffins in the grewsome row were uncovered.

"You see," said Bolter, as he approached the last one, "I was correct—they are all empty, and——"

The words died away on his lips.

As he opened the last box he was confronted by a motionless form in a shroud.

"Who is it?" queried Bertie.

"Good Heaven!" gasped Bolter; "it's the dead man—Sullivan."

"The man who was supposed to be in that box was taken out of here a short time ago?"

"Yes."

"How do you account for the fact that the corpse is here?" asked Bertie, coolly.

"I don't account for it—I can't," returned Bolter, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"I can."

"How?"

"Knowing I was after him, and wanting to get out of town in a quiet way, the man whom you call the Reverend Mr. Wiggins simply changed places with the corpse."

Bolter gave vent to a hollow groan.

"There'll be a pretty how d'ye do when that box reaches Giddings."

"What train was that box going out on?"

"Houston and Texas Central."

"What time does the train leave?"

"Three o'clock."

"What time is it now?"

"Three-five."

"Then we're five minutes too late to catch it."

"Exactly; and it will go through to Giddings."

"No, it won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I will telegraph the agent at Brenham to take it off the train, open it, and arrest our man."

"You will attend to this at once?"

"Yes; without a moment's delay."

"Then I will send on another box and be sure Sullivan is in it this time."

Bertie hurried away, sent his telegram and then went to a hotel and waited for a reply.

In a few hours the answer came.

"Diamond Dick, Jr., Houston: Took off box supposed to contain corpse of M. Sullivan. Nothing in the box but a quantity of express matter.

"J. HUMPHREY, Sheriff."

"Well," muttered Bertie, "I'm sure of one thing, and that is that this bank thief is an artful dodger and sharp as a steel trap. I am also positive that I will catch him. But what next? That's the question."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIND-READER.

As soon as the express messenger who had the run from Houston to Giddings returned to Houston, Diamond Dick, Jr., called to see him.

"Did you have a corpse in your charge when you left Houston on your last trip?" inquired Bertie.

"Yes, the sheriff came aboard and took it off at Brenham."

"Did you miss any express packages when you reached the end of your run?"

"Yes; but the sheriff found them and turned them over to the company."

"Then you are certain that you must have carried a pretty lively corpse out of Houston, and that it got out of the train, somewhere between here and Brenham, and filled up the box with express matter in order to weight it so that the escape would not be noticed until the box was opened?"

"That's it. You bet the corpse was lively enough—and foxy enough, too, for that matter, for I wasn't out of the express car for a minute."

"Then how do you account for what happened?"

"Well, I must have dozed off to sleep between stations. I have been overworked lately, as I have had to make a couple of extra trips to help out a messenger who is sick."

"You're a light sleeper?"

"Yes. The corpse must have been cat-footed."

"You have no idea where the man in the box got off?"

"No; because I dozed in my chair every time I got a chance."

Thus it happened that our hero left the express office without having obtained a particle of information.

He decided to go to the jail and interview the thief he had captured on the boat, and had just turned to proceed in the direction of the county jail when he felt some one clutch his sleeve.

The youth turned and came to a stop.

At his elbow was a man of cadaverous aspect, neatly dressed, and wearing long hair and a placid smile.

"I wouldn't go there if I were you, Diamond Dick, Jr."

"Wouldn't go where?" asked Bertie, in surprise.

"Why, to the jail."

"How do you happen to know that I am going to the jail?"

"What I do know, my young friend, fills a much larger book than what I don't know."

"You're modest about it."

"I can't help it—I was born so. That bank thief won't tell you a thing. I think, however, that the express messenger will help you out."

"How?"

"He has gone to see the darky porter of the sleeping-car that was hitched to the train from which the corpse disappeared."

"What has he gone to see him for?"

The man with the placid smile heaved a deep sigh.

"That I cannot tell. I get the information by a reflex action of your cerebrum and it's hard to read a man's mind in that way."

Bertie was mystified.

If the man were a fakir he was an ingenious one.

"What does the negro know that the messenger should want to bring him to me?"

"That's something else I cannot answer, but I can tell you this: If you get back to your hotel in half

an hour you will find the messenger and the negro waiting to see you. In the meantime, if you will drop around to a little resort that I know of, near here, I would be highly pleased to spend two bits for beer and can present something for your consideration which will be greatly to your benefit."

Determined to find out what this man's object was, Bertie accompanied him to a saloon and chop house where they could seat themselves in a room and be private.

"You wish me to tell you my name," said the man with the long hair; "you have that question on your mind now. Well, my name is Bill Dollar, and I am sometimes called Dollar Bill, Bogus Bill, Bad Dollar, and so on. But I'm all right. I'm a mind reader, friend—so versed in the psychological workings of the brains of biped mammals that I can possess myself of another's thoughts as easily as I can swallow this glass of beer. You will admit that that is no difficult task," and Mr. Bill Dollar gulped down his glass of Pilsener in a twinkling.

"What did you bring me here for?"

"It strikes me, Mr. Bertie Wade, that you and I would make a good pair to draw to. With your nerve and my mind-reading ability, we'd be simply invincible. I'm a phenomenon in a psychological way, but I haven't any sand. I'm a coward from the ground up."

"You admit it?"

"Freely. Now, you want to find the bank thief that escaped you on the boat, and, later, at the deposit vault and the undertaking rooms. You would also be pleased to run across the man in the linen duster. These thieves are wanted in Galveston. There is a reward out for them of twenty thousand dollars. That's five thousand for each of the thieves. Suppose we pool issues and divide what we make?"

"I'll do it," replied Bertie, rather amused at the idea of taking in such a partner.

"Good! I'll meet you at the Houston and Texas Central Railroad depot for the nine o'clock train tomorrow."

"But I'm not going out of the city just——"

"Oh, yes, you are! I'll meet you there. Depend on me. And here, my boy, is success to our partnership."

Bertie drained his glass and then set it down with a smile and left the place.

When he reached his hotel he was rather startled at being informed that the express messenger and a colored man were waiting to see him.

He went down to the office at once and presented himself to his callers.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"On the train that took out that lively corpse," replied the messenger, "Nick, here, was in the sleeping-car. He was sitting in an unoccupied berth looking out of a window. All at once he saw a man lying in a ditch alongside the track, and supposed at first he had fallen from the train. He started up to give the alarm, and then, thinking it might, after all, be only some tramp who had lain down there and gone to sleep, he sat down again. I met Nick on the street a short time after I talked with you, and he told me of this. I took him to the express people, first, but they simply laughed at the idea of the man in the ditch being the corpse. So I have brought him to you."

"Thank you," said Bertie; then, turning to the negro, he asked:

"What kind of clothes did the man in the ditch have on?"

"Black clo's, sah. Ah kain't tell much, mo dan dat, kase we skipped by so quick, but he was dressed in black, sah, dar's no doubt 'bout dat."

"Whereabouts did you see him?"

"'Tween Hempstead an' Chapel Hill, jes' dis side de bridge over de Brazos Ribber."

"The man in the ditch made no sound that you could hear? No cry or groan?"

"He lay jes' as still as a dead man, boss."

"All right," said Bertie. "Much obliged for the information."

Then he pressed a silver dollar into the hands of each of the men and went up to his room.

All that night, during his waking moments, which were many, he was thinking of Bill Dollar.

He at last came to the conclusion that either Dollar possessed a peculiar art or else that he was leagued with the robbers.

In any event, Bertie was determined to keep a watchful eye on his new partner.

"He'll have to prove himself before I trust him too far," mused the youth, as he finally dozed off to sleep.

CHAPTER V.

THE RING AND THE STAR.

When Bertie got up the next morning the first thing he did, after eating a hearty breakfast, was to call on the sheriff and secure an order on the jail-keeper permitting him to see the prisoner which the captain of the *Texas Belle* had promised to take care of.

A few hours in prison had taken a good deal of nerve out of the bank thief; in fact, he was feeling revengeful, which was just the mood our hero had hoped to find him in.

"Recognize me, do you?" queried Bertie, sitting down on a cot at the man's side.

The robber threw back his flannel shirt at the neck, baring his white, sinewy throat.

On the skin were to be seen five dark marks.

"You did that," growled the prisoner; "why should I not recognize you?"

Bertie smiled grimly.

"Why did you resist?"

"I resisted because I wanted to get away. I imagine you would have done the same under the circumstances."

"Certainly; but I shouldn't grumble at my black-and-blue spots if I did."

"It would have been all right if Hal had stood by me."

"Hal who?"

"Hal Porter."

"He was your partner, eh?"

"Yes; and he's one of the slickest crooks in the country."

"I admit that; but he abandoned you to your fate very gracefully."

"So he did, curse him!"

"You engineered that bank robbery in great shape."

The prisoner, however, was not to be taken off his guard.

"What robbery?" he asked, innocently.

"Ah," said Bertie, with a slight laugh, "I see you know nothing about it."

"I am not in the witness-box now."

"It may go easier for you at your trial if you tell us something beforehand."

"I'll think further about that after I talk with the State's attorney in Galveston."

"Then you have nothing to tell me about where the other men are?"

"Nothing."

"Not even about Porter? You will shield him, even after the scurvy treatment you received at his hands on board the *Texas Belle*?"

"What do you want to know about Porter?"

"What are some of his tricks?"

"Well, he's a master-hand at disguising himself, and his own mother couldn't tell him after he's rigged out. He has the trick of changing his voice, his manner, his walk, even his facial expression in such a way as to make him altogether a different person than he really is."

Bertie was doing some deep thinking.

"Is there any other art in which he is an adept?"

"Not that I know of. There's only one way I ever could tell Hal when he was disguised."

"What was that?"

"There is a blue star in a red ring tattooed on his right forearm. A look at the arm will prove Hal Porter's identity. I wish I could tell you where you could find him. As to the other boys, there isn't money enough in the United States to hire me to tell you anything about them."

"How do you know they are not captured?"

The crook laughed harshly.

"If the pilot had once piloted his boat under that tree in the bayou none of us would have been captured."

"Did you intend to escape into the swamp?"

"What we intended to do is a horse of another color. Don't try pumping me. I've been through the sweat-box so often that I know how to bridle my tongue."

"Very well," returned Bertie, "in that case there's no need of my remaining here any longer."

He thereupon left the jail.

As it was close to train-time, he hailed a cab, got inside, and was driven first to his hotel and then to the depot.

At the hotel he secured his satchel, a modest-looking "grip," and when he alighted at the station Mr. Dollar, still wearing his placid smile, was there to meet him.

"Your hand, partner," said Mr. Dollar, effusively, as he grasped Bertie's palm with a good deal of excessive warmth. "Did you find out anything at the jail?"

"If you know I've been to the jail you ought, also, to know whether I found out anything there. Focus your thinking mill on mine and see if you can make any kind of a guess."

Bill Dollar laughed.

"I don't have to guess. I know you didn't find out anything. You can keep nothing hidden from me, my boy."

"By George!" exclaimed Bertie, "you're a phenomenon."

"So I am, so I am. At one time I was the talk of Europe, and the Prince of Monaco offered me a million francs per month to boss his little gambling resort at Monte Carlo. You see, I was to use my mind-reading powers in finding out each fellow's particular pile and then we were to angle for the sucker. Ha, ha, ha! But I wouldn't have it. 'Prince,' says I, 'I wouldn't tackle your skin game for a million francs a minute. Some Russian count would get onto my job and fill me full of holes.'"

"That's what I call making a big sacrifice."

"Sacrifice! Why, young man, my life is full of sacrifices, as I told the Prince of Wales when he wanted me to run down and pick a winner for him at the Derby. You see—— By jingo, the conductor has just cried 'all aboard.' We'll have to get aboard, or get left, one or the other."

They sprang on the train just as it was pulling out.

Making their way into the smoking-car, they settled themselves comfortably and began a conversation over their cigars.

"How do you suppose Hal Porter was able to breathe in that coffin?" asked Bertie. "Under the law it is necessary to have a casket hermetically sealed. He would have smothered to death!"

Bill Dollar laughed.

"Don't you believe it. Porter is too old a crook to be caught in that way. He merely bored a hole through the side of the casket for air. The pine box outside, of course, was not air-tight."

"How did he get out of the casket?"

"Took a little saw with him and sawed his way out."

"But the express messenger—what was he doing all this time?"

"Sleeping. Porter didn't begin operations until he heard the messenger snore."

"Ah, I see."

They traveled along for several miles, and the train finally came to an abrupt stop between stations.

"Can this be a hold-up?" queried the mind-reader.

"Hardly," returned Bertie, throwing up the window and looking out. "There's a wreck ahead."

Part of a freight train had taken a switch while going along the main track, and, as a result, there had been a bad wreck.

Bertie and Bill Dollar got out and discovered that their delay was likely to be of several hours' duration.

"Dash the luck!" growled Dollar. "This is going to bring us late into Chapel Hill, and our birds may flee before we get there."

"Well," returned Bertie, "there's no use kicking at something we cannot help. Let's go back and have a game of seven-up."

They returned to the smoker and struck into a game of cards which lasted until the wreck was cleared away and the train started again, which was late in the afternoon.

It was quite dark when they pulled out of Brenham, and Diamond Dick, Jr., who was looking out of the car window, saw Bill Dollar rush out of the depot under the rays of a large oil lamp, tuck a slip of yellow paper in his pocket, and leap aboard the train.

That slip of paper was evidently a telegram.

Who could have been wiring the mind reader, and for what purpose?

This set the youth to thinking, and he went out and stood on the rear platform of the smoker, lighted a cigar and tried to give himself up to a little calm reflection.

As he sat on the handrail, close to the brake, Bill Dollar came out of the coach behind.

"Hello," he said, giving Bertie a sharp glance before he was able to recognize him in the darkness, "what are you doing out here, Diamond Dick, Jr.? Was it too hot for you in the car?"

"Yes."

The mind reader peered about him.

He and Bertie were alone on the two platforms and a light of satisfaction passed through his eyes.

Coming over to Bertie's side, he leaned against the end of the car.

"We ought not to lose any time after we reach Chapel Hill," said he; "suppose we plan what we shall do when we get there?"

"I have my plans matured."

"Ah! Well, I am glad of it, but——"

With the quickness of a cat, Bill Dollar caught Bertie about the waist with one arm, at the same time placing a hand over his mouth.

Then he made a strong effort to throw the youth from the platform.

Had Bertie so desired, he could have turned the

tables on the mind reader and thrown him from the train, and his first impulse was to do so, but he changed his mind.

Bill Dollar wore a thin, black alpaca coat, and Bertie caught it just above the pocket in which he had seen him place the telegram; then, as Dollar made another effort to push him off the platform, Bertie allowed himself to go, taking a portion of his "partner's" coat as he fell.

The train was not under full headway, and our hero had no intention of injuring himself.

When he dropped, he caught himself on his feet and retained his balance, but, in order to further the plan which had flashed like lightning through his brain, he gave vent to a hollow groan.

As the platform of the rear car swept past him, he managed to catch the guard rail and swing himself back on the train.

For some moments he stood on the platform, wondering at the treachery of his alleged "partner."

Could that telegram have anything to do with it?

Bertie examined the piece of coat that he still held in his hand.

The telegram was in the pocket which had come away with the cloth.

Transferring the yellow slip into his own clothes, the youth threw away the piece of coat and looked into the car through the window in the door.

Dollar was not in that coach. Probably he was still in the smoker.

It was in the rear car that Bertie had left his grip when he boarded the train at Houston.

He now walked in, secured the grip, and returned to the rear platform.

The contents of the little satchel consisted principally of a female disguise, which he quickly slipped himself into.

He had barely time to accomplish this when the train pulled up at the station in Mill Creek.

Stepping off on the station platform, Bertie walked ahead, and the brakeman assisted him to mount the second coach, evidently thinking that the "lady"

was a passenger getting on at the place—just what the youth wanted him to think.

Going into the coach, our hero sat down, looked about the car to see that Bill Dollar was not in it, and then drew the telegram from his pocket.

At first glance the telegram had a peculiar look.

Here it is:

"William Dollar, Brenham:

"Securcsalotnoemoc.

ANDY."

"What the blazes does that mean?" mused Bertie, rubbing his forehead reflectively.

For fifteen minutes he studied over the strange wording of that telegram.

Then he turned the slip over in his hand to look at the back. When he did so, the light happened to strike through and the cipher—if such a simple expedient could be called a "cipher"—was instantly made clear to him.

The letters of the words and the words themselves were simply written backward without spacing between any part of the sentence.

"Come on to Las Cruces."

That was the text of the message.

"The mind reader evidently doesn't want my company to Las Cruces," chuckled Bertie. "Well, he's going to have it, whether he wants it or not."

At that instant Bill Dollar came into the car.

Bertie pulled a veil over his face.

Dollar had taken off the remnant of his coat and was in his shirt sleeves.

Bertie must have wrenched the sleeve of that alpaca coat pretty hard, for he had torn away the sleeve of the shirt beneath it, from the elbow down.

Bill Dollar's right forearm was bare.

As he passed along the aisle, Bertie gave a start in spite of himself.

On his arm was tattooed a blue star in a red ring!

CHAPTER VI.

THE REAR PLATFORM.

For a moment Bertie was mystified with his discovery.

Could it be possible that Bill Dollar was none other than Hal Porter, the bank thief?

The crook whom the youth had interviewed in the jail at Houston had said that Porter was a master-hand at disguising himself, but Bertie did not believe that he could be so deceived in his man.

The expression, even the shape of Dollar's face were so unlike the "Reverend Mr. Wiggins" that it seemed hardly possible the two men could be one and the same.

Dollar had come into that coach for a purpose.

As he walked through it he closely scanned the faces of each passenger, at the same time giving some attention to the luggage they carried.

His eyes fell on Bertie's little valise, and he gave a start.

After passing by he came back and stopped in the aisle opposite Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Madame," said he, "is that your satchel?"

"Certainly," answered Bertie, disguising his voice.

"Pardon me, but I have mislaid mine and that looks very much like it."

Dollar left the car, but Bertie could see that he was far from being satisfied about the "grip."

A few seats ahead of where our hero sat was a cowboy who was traveling with all the *impedimenta* of his calling—buckskin, charparrejos, revolvers like mountain howitzers, a blacksnake whip, rawhide riata, etc.

Bertie walked over and touched him on the shoulder.

"What is it, marm?" asked the cowboy.

"Are you a circus man?"

"Not much! I'm a cowboy."

"Law sakes! I've heard tell about cowboys. So you're one of them, be you?"

"The cowpuncher" evidently enjoyed the situation hugely.

"You bet!" he replied. "I'm called the Terror of the Range, an' I can rope a steer quicker'n anybody in Texas."

"Do tell! Will you sell me somethin' I can remember you by?"

"Sure! Sell you anythin' I got."

Bertie began looking him over with a view to finding something he could purchase.

"How'd you like this whip?" asked the cowboy, seeing the "lady's" perplexity.

"How much?"

"Give ye that for ten dollars."

"Ain't you got somethin' for about five dollars?"

"Give you that riata for five dollars."

"All right, I'll take that."

Bertie produced the money, and the riata changed hands.

"I'm glad I've seen a real live cowboy," remarked Bertie, as he returned to his seat.

The riata was neatly coiled, and the youth managed to slip it into the bosom of his dress unobserved.

Not long after this Bill Dollar came into the car once more, and took a seat facing Diamond Dick, Jr.

This was exactly what our hero wanted.

He knew that Dollar was solicitous on account of that grip, which he had recognized as belonging to Diamond Dick, Jr.

Getting up, Bertie took the grip and walked out to the rear end of the car.

There he remained, knowing well that Dollar's curiosity would cause him to follow.

Thoroughly convinced that the supposed "mind reader" was Hal Porter in disguise, Bertie had but one wish, and that was to capture him.

The youth did not have long to wait on the rear platform.

Dollar's face shortly appeared at the window in the door and then he opened the door and stepped out.

"I should think you would be afraid to stand out here, madame," he remarked.

"Goodness gracious, no! I'm mortal 'feared of accidents, an' John told me 'fore I left home that the step of the back keer was a good safe place in case of a smash-up. So I reckon I'll ride here."

"You brought that satchel all the way from home, did you?"

"'Course I did."

"It looks wonderfully like mine."

"Looky here, young man—you don't suppose I'm trapesing 'round the kentry stealin' satchels, do you?"

"No, certainly not."

"Then don't say anythin' more 'bout this satchel. Law sakes! hold me! I'm goin' to fall off!"

The train had suddenly swept round a sharp curve, and Bertie pretended to be thrown to one side. Catching the handle bar with both hands, he hung to it and seemed about to fall.

Bill Dollar leaped to his assistance.

Throwing his arm about the supposed woman's waist, he sought to swing his burden back to the

platform, but Bertie dropped his satchel and caught the crook about the throat with a grip of iron.

"Let go!" gasped Dollar.

Bertie made no answer, but his fingers pressed tighter and tighter about the robber's windpipe.

Dollar sought to break loose, but found this impossible.

He then recklessly endeavored to throw himself from the train, but Bertie had twined his legs about the iron handrail and could not be dislodged.

Gradually his struggles grew feebler and feebler.

Bertie watched him like a hawk, and when he had been choked into partial insensibility he drew the riata from the bosom of the dress, tied the crook's hands behind his back, and bound him against the handrail across the end of the car.

Then he sat on the rail opposite, and watched until Dollar had thrown over the semi-lethargy that had made him so passive while the tying operation was going on.

"By thunder!" were Dollar's first words; "you've got more muscle than any woman I ever saw in my life."

"Think so, do you, Mr. Porter?" laughed Bertie, dropping his thin, feminine voice, and speaking in his natural tone.

"Can it be possible that you are——"

"Diamond Dick, Jr.? Certainly it is possible. Just look here!"

In a twinkling, Bertie had removed his dress and bonnet and stood forth in his customary garments.

"Well," growled Dollar, "I'm beat!"

"You're pretty foxy, but I guess I got the best of you this time, eh?"

"No doubt about that. What have you tied me up for?"

"You've got a pal in the Houston jail, and I'm running you all in so that you can have a little reunion in the Galveston calaboose."

"I don't understand you."

"Bosh! You understand well enough. I'm now going to get the conductor or one of the brakemen. We will then take you inside the coach and keep you well bound until we get to Austin. I will telegraph and have the chief of police at the train to meet us."

"It is very kind of you to look after my comfort in this way," said Dollar, sarcastically.

"Don't mention it," replied Bertie, as he started into the car.

At that moment the train drew up at the platform of Giddings station.

Reflecting that the conductor and brakemen would probably be busy, Bertie deferred seeing them just then and stood on the platform of the smoker waiting until the trainmen should board the train again.

As he stood there, he saw a man running along the lighted platform.

One look at the man and Bertie dropped hastily off the train which had just started.

The man was Dollar!

He had the same torn shirt and the identical blue star and red ring tattooed upon his right forearm.

How had the fellow managed to get loose?

"He must be leagued with the old Nick himself," muttered Bertie, as he started in pursuit.

Dollar ran up the track, the train pounding along at his side.

Of course it took the train but a moment to pass them, and when it did and Bertie's eyes fell upon the rear platform of the last coach he was overwhelmed with consternation and came to an abrupt standstill.

There, securely tied to the handrail, just as he had left him, was Bill Dollar!

There was no doubt about it.

CHAPTER VII.

"NOT FOXY ENOUGH!"

Bertie passed his hand over his face in a dazed way.

"Was it an optical delusion?" he muttered. "Did I see Bill Dollar on the platform of the depot or on the platform of the rear car? Is it possible that there are two of them?"

Bertie reflected for a moment and then turned and hurried back to the depot.

"If there are two of them," he said to himself, "I'll make sure of capturing one, at any rate!"

Going into the station, he stopped at the window of the telegraph office.

"What was the number of that passenger train that just passed through here?" he asked of the operator.

"Number six."

Then he hastily dictated the following message:

"Conductor Train No. 6, Paige, Texas:

"There's a man tied to the handrail on rear platform of last coach of your train. He is a bank rob-

ber. Secure him and deliver him over to the police at Austin.
DIAMOND DICK, JR."

"Send that at once," said Bertie.

The operator did so.

Half an hour later the following answer was received:

"Diamond Dick, Jr., Giddings, Texas:

"No man on the rear platform.

"BAYLEY, Conductor No. 6."

"Dash the luck!" growled Bertie, as he turned away from the operator's window, "I'm at sea again."

As he was about to open the door it was thrown open in his face, and two men came into the waiting-room, carrying a third man between them.

"Hey, Bill!" called one of the bearers as the limp form was laid on the floor.

"What's the matter?" queried the night operator, thrusting his head through his little window.

"Man tried to board No. Six and got turned heels over head at the water tank. He ought to have a doctor. Don't know but he's dead, now."

"The deuce you say!" returned the operator, coming out of his office.

Advancing to the man's side, Bertie knelt down to ascertain the extent of his injuries.

Another surprise was in store for the youth.

There was the shirt with one sleeve torn off at the elbow and the mark of the ring and the star on the forearm.

"Ah, ha!" thought Bertie, "I am not playing in such hard luck, after all. Fate has placed one of the rascals in my hands, at least, and he will probably prove the key to the mystery."

"Is he dead?" asked the operator.

"His heart still beats," replied Bertie. "Give me a sponge so I can wipe the blood from his face."

A damp sponge was quickly produced.

The cool water, however, had no reviving effect upon the man, and Bertie advised that he be carried to the nearest hotel and a doctor summoned.

There was a hotel just across the street from the depot, and one of the men who had carried Dollar into the depot went for a doctor, while Bertie, the night operator, and the other man carried the unconscious bank robber to the hotel.

A small room was secured and the wounded man was made as comfortable as possible.

"I can't understand what keeps him so long unconscious," said Bertie.

"Here comes the doctor," returned the operator; "perhaps he can tell us."

The doctor was a little, wiry man, and, at this particular moment he came into the room carrying his medicine case in his hand.

"Where is the patient, gentlemen?" he asked.

Bertie led him into the bedroom.

"Fell from a train, did he?"

"Yes."

"Been unconscious all the time?"

"Hasn't moved an eye winker since," replied the operator.

"Very strange," mused the doctor, feeling of the wounded man's pulse. "His pulse is nearly, if not quite, normal. This room is very small and close, gentlemen. Raise the windows, please, and then withdraw. I think I will be able to bring him around all right in a few minutes."

The windows were raised and Bertie and the operator retired to the other room.

The other two men had left some time before. The door of the chamber was left open, to secure a greater circulation of air, and the youth and his companion could hear the doctor moving around in his work over Dollar.

At last all became quiet, and remained so for several minutes.

Bertie was just beginning to suspect that all was not right when the doctor staggered into the room and dropped into a chair.

"What's the matter?" cried the operator.

"That man was no more unconscious than you and I are, this minute," gasped the doctor.

Bertie sprang to the door of the bedroom and looked in.

There was no one there!

"Where did he go?" cried Bertie.

The doctor shook his head.

"That's more than I can tell."

"What did he do to you?"

"Choked me into insensibility. Zounds! it seems to me that I can feel his grip about my throat yet. While I was bending over him he suddenly threw up his arms and caught me as in a vise. I tried to struggle and make my situation known to you out here, but it was impossible for me to do so. Then everything became a blank to me and—— Well,

that's all. As soon as I got my senses back I came out here."

Bertie stepped into the bedroom.

The operator followed him.

"He got out of the window," said Bertie; "that's plain enough to be seen."

"And here's something he left behind him," returned the operator, picking up a scrap of paper that lay on the floor.

The paper looked as though it was a leaf torn from a note book.

Upon it was written the following:

"Diamond Dick, Jr.:

"You might as well saw off. You're not foxy enough for the all-star combination.

"ONE OF THEM."

"I'm on my mettle now," muttered Bertie, as he left the hotel with the scrap of paper in his hand; "if I can't settle this all-star gang I'll throw up the detective business and go to farming. My next move is in the direction of Las Cruces. I wonder what the blazes has become of that chap in the linen duster! If he's having anything like the time I am, those other two crooks are leading him a gay chase."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MAN OF NERVE.

There is a saloon and gambling joint in Las Cruces which does business under the alluring title of "The Happy Heathen."

The proprietor is a man whose boast is that "he never liked civilization and civilization never liked him;" consequently, whenever progress made too great strides in his vicinity he picked up his traps and moved on.

On the night when we look into the Happy Heathen the particular high jinks which characterized the place are proceeding without let or hindrance.

Perhaps there was more enjoyment to the square inch as the Governor of the wide domain of Arizona happened to be in the room and an extempore levee was the order of the evening.

Besides the Governor, Whooping Andy, a cow "puncher," gambler and all-round bad man all the way from the Gila, was enjoying the peculiar advantages of the Happy Heathen.

Whooping Andy was known almost as well as the

Governor. In fact, more people would have walked farther to see Andy than to see his excellency.

Andy had a record of sixteen men, redskins and Mexicans not counted, right there in Arizona. For this reason he was high and mighty wherever he happened to show up.

Whooping Andy was playing poker with two other gentlemen, one of whom was a Mexican and the other a rancher.

As Andy never took a hand in a game that had not a limit as high as the ceiling the crowd clustered about the table where the play was going on.

The Governor was an interested spectator.

He knew Andy and Andy knew the Governor.

"Howdy, Gov," said Andy, scarce taking his eyes from his cards.

"How are you, Andy?" returned the Governor.

Liquor flowed in a stream at that particular table, for two of the players, at least, were nerving themselves for a grand stand show.

The Mexican drank little and seemed to spend his time looking at Andy out from under the brim of his steeple-crowned hat.

In the course of time that festive layout known as a jack-pot put itself in evidence and the cards were dealt round several times before any one was found with the nerve and cards to open it.

"I'll open 'er, podner," said the rancher, finally, "for an even thousand dollars."

The Mexican dropped out.

"It's a bloomin' shame," growled Andy, "fer a chap to break in ahead of another like that. Had ye let 'er come to me, I'd a socked ther jimption to it fer a couple o' thousand, anyhow. Howsumever, I'm stayin' an' I want two keerds."

The rancher dealt Andy his cards, but stood pat himself.

It looked as though Andy had drawn two threes, but whether he had caught the necessary card to give him "fours" was a mystery.

Whooping Andy's face was never an index of his feelings.

"I reckon my hand's wuth a thousand, anyhow," said Andy, taking a roll of bills from his pocket and counting off two of the five-hundred variety.

They were brand-new bills, and the Mexican's quick eye saw that they were issued by the Consolidated National Bank, of Galveston.

"I can see double that in this hand of mine," said the rancher, putting up his collateral.

Andy studied his hand for a few moments, and then went down into his jeans again.

"Thar's yer two thousand, pard, an' I'll jest give yer nerve a shock by comin' back at ye with five thousand, cold."

Five one thousand-dollar bills, and four five hundred-dollar bills, all brand-new and from the Galveston bank, dropped on the pile.

It was now the rancher's turn to do some studying.

The interest of the people around the room was intense.

The Governor had caught his breath several times, and was now, figuratively speaking, "holding" it.

At last the rancher drew a paper from his pocket.

"Pard," said he, "I haven't enough of the long green to keep up with this interestin' game, but there's the deed to a cattle ranch in Texas, where I belong, that's worth ten thousand of any man's money. If it's agreeable, I'll see you the five thousand an' raise ye the other five."

Whooping Andy considered that his reputation was at stake.

To be done up in a poker game by a man from Texas was more than he could stand, but he had reached the bottom of his pile and he had no ranch to fall back on. He allowed his eyes to wander about the room. At last they fell on the Governor and an idea began to filter through Andy's mind.

"Will ye give me ten minute's time?" he asked.

"Sure," replied the Texan.

Asking a friend to drop into his chair and watch his hand, Whooping Andy went forward to the bar, secured a piece of paper from the barkeeper and wrote rapidly for a few minutes.

Then he came back and addressed himself to the Governor.

"Say, Gov, your life ain't nothin' compared to the reputation of Whoopin' Andy as the boss poker player of the Southwest. You know me and you know that when I say a thing I mean it. That hand of mine can't be beat, and I ain't goin' ter lay it down jest kase I've run short of the ready ter back it up. You're the Governor, an' this hull dod-gasted Territory b'longs to you. Thar's a deed fer the Territory of Arizony, an' if ye don't sign it, transferrin' the property ter me, I'll send ye to a hotter place than Yuma!"

As Whooping Andy spoke he toyed with the handle of the miniature cannon that dangled on his hip.

Knowing it was a joke so far as the legality of the

instrument was concerned, the Governor signed the paper and Andy resumed his place at the table.

"Thar ye air," said Andy. "I see yer durned Texas ranch an' raise ye the Territory of Arizona."

The Texan gave a gasp as he threw his cards, face up, on the table.

"I can't meet yer, pardner, owin' to the absence from this room of the Governor of Texas. If I could git the drop on him fer about a holy minit, I'd raise ye clear out of yer shoes."

Whooping Andy gave vent to a low laugh as he tucked away his stakes and possessed himself of the deed to the ranch.

Turning to the Governor, he handed back the paper he had signed.

"Much obliged, Gov, fer yer lendin' me the Territory long enough to call our friend down. You can now step in and assume possession again."

As Whooping Andy walked away he left his hand lying on the table.

The Texan looked at it and swore under his breath.

Andy had just a brace of deuces!

In the back of the saloon were rooms where patrons of the Happy Heathen could drink their potations in private.

Into one of these the successful poker player made his way.

The Mexican who had played in the game until it had assumed too large proportions for his pocket-book, saw the door close behind Whooping Andy.

He then slipped out of the building, climbed up to the roof by means of a shed in the rear and then crawled along the roof until he reached a point directly over the room which Andy had entered.

The clapboards, which were used on the roof in place of shingles, were loose.

One of these the Mexican removed and was thus able to look into the room below and to hear everything that was said.

Andy had met a man and the two were engaged in a conversation.

"You're too confounded reckless, Andy!" said the man who was with the gambler.

"How so?"

"Making such a free show of those bills."

"Nobody caught onto them."

"You don't know whether they did or not."

"Well, even if some one did, I reckon the all-star

can take a few chances when it pulls in a wad like that."

"You want to remember one thing."

"What's that?"

"Diamond Dick, Jr., is after us, and it is his boast that when he once strikes a trail he never lets up until he gets his man."

"You handled Diamond Dick, Jr., pretty well, Porter."

"What I did was merely by a scratch. He's onto me, now, and I will have hard trouble shaking him."

"When will Tony be here?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he were at the rendezvous now. After Diamond Dick, Jr., tied me up on the rear of the car he saw Tony on the depot platform, thought it was me, and dropped off the train. Tony had a hard time getting away. You see, he tried to board the train again, in the dark, missed his hold, and was thrown to the ground and rendered unconscious. Some of the station men found him and carried him back to the depot. When Tony came to himself he found that he was in the hands of his enemies, and he continued to feign unconsciousness. They carried him to a hotel, put him in a bed, and called in a doctor. Tony throttled the doctor and got away."

"Good for Tony!"

"I can tell you the slickest thing our combination ever did."

"What's that?"

"Duplicating that tattoo mark of mine on all the members."

"Then they can't tell us apart, hey?"

"Not when we happen to be disguised. I have been leading Diamond Dick, Jr., a merry chase myself."

"So I understand."

"As soon as I got out of that box in the baggage car I caught another train right back to Houston, rigged myself out as a mind reader——"

"Your old game."

"Yes, and before I pulled out of Houston with Diamond Dick, Jr., I met Tony and brought him along. I got your telegram at Brenham."

"You think Diamond Dick, Jr., has been side-tracked completely?"

"There's no doubt about it."

"Then all that remains for us to do is to go to the rendezvous and practice our little gold extraction business like the good, honest people we are."

Porter laughed.

"That's the idea, Andy."

"I don't know how the cyanide business has been getting along since I left. I imagine it's all right, however. Anything more?"

"Not that I know of. Where are the vats?"

"At the Bonanza Mine."

"If I don't go out with you I can find the place all right, can't I?"

"Without the slightest trouble."

The men left the room below, and the Mexican slid down off the roof.

"So they think Diamond Dick, Jr., has been side-tracked, do they?" he muttered, with a low laugh.

The 'Mexican' was none other than Diamond Dick, Jr., himself!

"They don't happen to know that I'm on my mettle now, and bound to win," continued the youth; "but I'll lead them a dance they won't soon forget before I am through with them."

With these half-voiced words, he turned and hurried off into the darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CYANIDE VATS.

When Diamond Dick, Jr., left the Happy Heathen he assumed his usual garments, washed the dark stain from his face, and called upon the sheriff.

That worthy was in bed and soundly snoring, but it only took our hero a few moments to get him to the door of his house.

"What do you want?" queried the officer.

"Do you know anything about a mine in this vicinity called the Bonanza?"

"Sure thing; but you haven't slam-banged around here and got me up just to tell you about that, have you?"

"There's something else back of it."

"Do you want to buy the Bonanza?"

"Why?"

"Well, if you do, just don't, that's why."

"What's the matter with it?"

"Worked out."

"Isn't there any one working up there?"

"Yep; Whooping Andy has a gang of men cyaniding the tailings from the stamp mill. You see, the mine was good while it lasted, and thousands of tons of ore went through the stamp mill. The tailings are still on the dump, and they run about seven dollars

in gold to the ton. They say Andy is making a good thing, but I doubt it. There's too much copper."

"What's Whooping Andy's reputation?"

"Bad."

"Would you believe me if I told you he was a bank robber?"

"I'd believe anything you told me about Andy."

"Well, Andy is badly wanted. The Bonanza Mine is nothing more or less than a rendezvous for a trio of murderous crooks. I am here for the purpose of running in the whole combination, and I want you to help me."

"Is there anything in it?"

"If we catch them—yes."

"Do you think that you and I can do the job?"

"Why not?"

"Why, if they're all like Andy it'll take a regiment to run 'em in."

"Nonsense. Will you go with me?"

"When?"

"Now."

"To-night?"

"Yes, at once."

"All right. Sam Peabody never refuses the call of duty, especially if there's a little dinero behind the job."

"Have you got any horses?"

"Two. They're in the barn behind the house. You might be saddling 'em up while I slip into my duds."

"Very well."

Peabody drew back into the house and Bertie made his way to the stable.

It took him but a few moments to saddle and bridle the horses, and the sheriff was ready for him when he led the animals around in front.

"Got your guns?" asked Bertie.

"Never travel without them."

"Then let's be on the road."

Without loss of time they sprang into the saddles and rode off, the sheriff taking the lead.

"We have to go through some pretty rough country," remarked Peabody.

"Never mind that. I'm used to hard riding."

"Glad to hear it."

For some time they rode on in silence, the miles slipping rapidly out from under the fleet feet of their animals.

At last they struck a rocky plateau and the dark figure of a man stepped suddenly out from behind a

pile of bowlders and stood directly in the middle of the rail.

"Halt!"

The dark figure raised one hand warningly.

"Whoa!" cried Peabody. "Who the nation are you?"

"Whooping Andy."

The sheriff modified his voice very materially as he asked:

"What do you want, Andy?"

"I want you to turn back, Sam Peabody."

"The duece you say! Hasn't the sheriff got a right to go anywhere he pleases in this country?"

"Ordinarily, yes; but I've got an idee you're going to the Bonanza and we ain't hankerin' for your society up there."

"You never hanker after my society. It isn't your way."

"Well, we'll bite this short. You know me. Don't you go up there, that's all."

With these words, Whooping Andy vanished into the darkness.

"What do you think of that?" said the sheriff to Bertie, in a low tone.

"I don't like it."

"Neither do I."

"Not that I care a rap about Whooping Andy, but I am sorry they are onto our plan."

"We can fool him."

"How?"

"By doubling back on the trail we have come over and going into the Bonanza by another road that I'll gamble Andy knows nothing about."

"All right; lead on, and I'll follow."

Peabody forged ahead.

After proceeding something like a mile, he turned from the trail and struck off through the country, where, even to Bertie's experienced eye, there was not even a bridle path to be seen.

Over steep hills and through dense growths of underbrush the sheriff held his way, warning Bertie from time to time to dodge a palo christie, with its sharp thorns, or to beware of the jutting shoulders of some rocky bowlder in the chasm through which they happened to be riding.

At last they came abruptly out upon a flat.

The moon was bright, and Diamond Dick, Jr., could see in front of him the spectral outlines of an old stamp mill, its tall smokestack rising up like an ominous shadow.

Under the side of the stamp mill, in the center of the space covered with the white "tailings," could be seen the huge cyanide vats.

Above the vats were planks along which the tailings were wheeled.

"There you are," said Peabody, pulling in his horse. "There's the old Bonanza."

"No trace of the gang to be seen, is there?"

"Beyond the mill, to the left, is the old boarding-house. That's probably where they are. You see —"

"Hist!"

"What's up?"

"Listen! Can't you hear something?"

A hollow, drumming sound came from the direction of the mill.

"Have you any idea what that noise is?"

"Not the slightest."

"I'll investigate a little."

"Shall I go along?"

"No; you remain here and take care of the horses."

Bertie slipped out of his saddle and started across the moonlit mesa.

He had not proceeded far before he thought it best to drop on his knees and crawl under the shadow of the low greasewood bushes that grew in scattered clumps all over the plateau.

As he drew near the cyanide vats the drumming sound grew louder to his ears.

He at last satisfied himself that it came from within one of the tanks.

He finally succeeded in locating the particular tank and made his way to the end of the plank walk that ran over the series of tanks and crawled upward and along it.

When over the particular vat from which the strange sounds proceeded, he halted and peered down into the darkness beneath him.

At first he could see nothing, but gradually he managed to make out the figure of a man standing against one of the wooden walls.

"If you are a friend," came a hollow voice from below, "stop and give me your assistance; but if you are one of the accursed clique that profess to operate this cyanide outfit, pass on!"

"I am a friend," said Bertie.

"What is your name?"

"Diamond Dick, Jr.!"

A muttered exclamation came from below.

"Who are you?" inquired Bertie.

"I'm the man in the linen duster—the man who spoke to you on the *Texas Belle*. Do you remember?"

It was now Bertie's turn to be surprised.

"How came you here?"

"It's a long story, and if you don't help me out of this, without loss of time, I'll never be able to tell it. When the cyanide solution is turned in here that will settle me."

"Are you tied?"

"Yes."

"It's a wonder they didn't gag you."

"So they did, but I succeeded, a moment ago, in chewing the gag in two."

Crawling along the plank until he reached the edge of the vat, Bertie lowered himself down until he was able to cut the detective's bonds.

As the man in the linen duster crawled up onto the plank a swishing sound was heard in the bottom of the tank.

"Not a minute too soon!" muttered the detective.

"How so?"

"Don't you hear that gurgling sound? It's the cyanide solution coming into the vat."

"And those scoundrels intended to drown you in that?"

"It looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Very much, although it hardly seems possible that men could be so inhuman. Come this way!"

The two then made their way back to the place where Bertie had left the sheriff.

"I don't know your name," said the youth to the detective; "if you told it to me aboard the *Texas Belle* I've forgotten it."

"My name's Carter—Tom Carter."

"Mr. Carter, Mr. Peabody, the sheriff of Dona Ana County."

The two men shook hands cordially.

"How did you make out with the two men you followed to the upper deck of the steamer, Diamond Dick, Jr.?" queried Carter, turning to Bertie.

"One of them is now in the Houston jail; the other I have tried very hard to capture, but, so far, have had little success."

"Nevertheless, your success has been greater than mine, for both my men got away. They are desperate fellows, and as foxy as they are desperate."

"How did you manage to disappear from the boat so suddenly?"

"There's quite a story behind that."

"We'll hear the story later. I came out here with Mr. Peabody prepared to capture the bank thieves."

"Whooping Andy isn't at the house. I believe they expect him back any minute. He will come along the trail to the right of us here. As he's the toughest customer in the combination, it might be well for all three of us to tackle the job. I would, therefore, suggest that we wait here until we hear Andy coming."

"Good plan," spoke up the sheriff.

"I'm agreeable," added Bertie. "While we're waiting, Carter, you might spin that yarn of yours."

"With pleasure."

"First," put in Peabody, "as I happen to have a cigar apiece I move that we light up before Mr. Carter begins."

The sheriff's cigars were duly lighted, and Carter began his story.

CHAPTER X.

CARTER'S STORY.

"As soon as you left me and went upstairs, Diamond Dick, Jr.," said Carter, "I set about making my attempt to capture the two men who had remained below."

"I believe, now, they had an idea that they were followed, and that this was the reason they separated."

"When I started toward them they made a break for the side of the boat."

"About this time some negroes began playing banjos and guitars and singing on the rear deck, and the part of the craft where the two crooks and myself were was temporarily deserted."

"I did not like this."

"One of the men I had to deal with was Whooping Andy, and I thought that I might need help."

"However, now that I was close on to my quarry, I couldn't think of delaying matters, so I slipped out my revolvers and brought them to bear on each of the crooks."

"Stand where you are!" I commanded; "just one move and I'll fill you full of holes."

"There is no doubt in my mind but that they were expecting this summons."

"Who are you?" growled Andy, by way of gaining time, I suppose.

"Carter, from Galveston," I replied.

"Well, Carter from Galveston," went on Andy,

with one of his wicked little smiles, 'you've got the bulge on us, and we weaken.'

"As he spoke he held out his wrists toward me."

"This put me in a quandary."

"In order to get the irons on the men I was obliged to put one of my guns in my pocket, so that I could attend to the operation with my left hand."

"I had two men to cover, but I resolved to take chances."

"Dropping one of my 38s into my coat pocket, I developed a brace of come-alongs, and stepped up to Andy."

"Placing the muzzle of my revolver against Andy's breast, I looked him squarely in the eyes while I spoke to his companion."

"Tony Turner," said I, 'if you make a move to escape or to lay me out, I'll pull the trigger and do up Andy.'

"I thought, then, that I held the whip-hand on the situation, but it only took a couple of seconds to undeceive me."

"With the quickness of lightning, Andy did something, and I have been trying ever since to think what it was."

"All I know is that I suddenly found myself in the bayou."

"A couple of splashes, very low, as of some persons getting carefully into the water, followed the one I made, and then I realized that Tony and Andy had left the boat."

"Tony made direct for shore, while Andy swam in my direction."

"I raised myself up and tried to yell, so as to call the attention of the people on the steamer."

"Before a sound could leave my lips, Andy had me about the throat."

"Curse you!" he hissed; 'before I git through with ye ye'll wish ye'd never been born!'

"That's what I thought, too, for I was like a child in the big fellow's grasp."

"As Andy was not able to use his hands for swimming purposes, we sank down in the waters of the bayou."

"When Andy got out of breath he would release one hand to pump himself up to the surface again, once more catching me about the neck after he had got his wind."

"As I was a good swimmer, however, and used to holding my breath, I was hard to kill in this fashion,

and Andy soon got disgusted, gave me a thump on the head with his big fist, and swam away.

"The blow was a hard one, but I bore it much better than I could have hoped.

"I pretended to be stunned, took a good breath and sank down.

"Then I swam under water to the bank of the bayou, and waited in the thick flags that lined the water's edge until the two crooks started off.

"I then emerged from the water and followed them.

"From their conversation, I judged that they thought they had done for me, and, on the whole, I was glad to have them think so.

"After walking through the timber for a mile or more, the two crooks came to a halt, and I stepped out of sight behind a tree.

"Here we are," said Andy, "and that feller I bought the hoss from don't seem to be here."

"There's the horse, at any rate," replied Tony; "we don't care anything about the fellow that owned him."

"Right you are! If Hal Porter had been able to get the pilot to stop under that oak we could have come ashore without wetting, and would have been saved this long walk."

"You don't seem to be at all anxious about that horse."

"Neither am I; it's the saddle I'm anxious about."

"They then walked toward the horse, and Andy unscrewed the top of the saddle pommel.

"Keno!" he cried, exultantly, drawing out some crisp, new bank bills; "here's the stuff!"

"And it was just as well that the man who sold you the horse didn't know anything about the secret of that saddle."

"I've used that saddle a dozen times for the same purpose, and it has never failed. Why, the sheriff of Dona Ana County has ridden on that very saddle while chasing me to get back a couple of hundred that I took from a jay in Las Cruces. He didn't find the stuff on me, and had to let me go—ha, ha, ha!"

"What are we going to do now?"

"We'll ride double to the nearest railroad point. We'll take the first train, and you can drop off at Brenham, while I go on and find out how things are ahead. I can get that information in Austin. If the coast is clear at Las Cruces, and I think it is, we'll go up to the cyanide plant at the Bonanza Mine. I'll wire you at Brenham, under the general name of Bill

Dollar, which any of our combination assumes on a pinch."

"That will do."

"Then the crooks mounted the horse and rode off.

"I was not far from the railroad town of Deer Park, and I made for it, got a change of clothing, and started for Las Cruces.

"As soon as I reached this section of the country I made at once for the Bonanza Mine, and laid low waiting for Andy and the rest to show up, if they were going to.

"Well, they did show up, and caught me napping.

"Some of Andy's men ran across me in the timber, and took me a prisoner, although I fought like a fiend to get away.

"When Andy came up to the mine and saw me, he was very much astonished, if one could judge of his feelings by the way he swore.

"Confound you, Tom Carter!" said he, "I thought I had sent you to feed the alligators in Buffalo Bayou!"

"Your intentions were good," I replied, "but I managed to cheat the alligators."

"It's as broad as it is long," he went on; "we will see what luck you have in cheating the cyanide vats."

"He then had me bound in the tank as you saw me.

"I realized what his purpose was.

"As soon as the cyanide solution was turned in the poisonous stuff would be the death of me.

"I tried to cry for help, but I had been gagged and could make no sound.

"Then, realizing that time was short for making an escape, I began chewing at my gag and kicking with my heels against the side of the hollow tank.

"Just as you came, Diamond Dick, Jr., I had freed myself of the gag."

"You've had a pretty tough experience," said Bertie; "it almost rivals mine."

"Quiet!" broke in the sheriff in a whisper; "here comes his nibbs!"

CHAPTER XI.

BERTIE'S PRIZE KNOCKOUT.

The sheriff's whispered words put each one of the little group on the *qui-vive*.

In the silence that followed, the ring of a horse's

shoes, striking against the rocks, could be distinctly heard.

At Bertie's suggestion, the three watchers drew farther back into the shadow of the timber.

"Now, look here, gentlemen," whispered Peabody, "that Whooping Andy isn't so high and mighty as he thinks he is. You gentlemen stand here and I'll just step out into the trail and arrest him."

"I think we had better all fall on him at once," returned Carter.

"It would be the safest plan," added Bertie.

"It would be the safest has been told around in this section by a good many people," went on the sheriff, "that Sam Peabody was afraid to tackle Andy face to face. I want to give all those fellows the lie. I'm not afraid of man or devil. As a personal favor, I ask you gentlemen to let me capture that fellow single-handed. You can draw a bead on him, if you like, and be prepared to take a hand in case he proves too much for me."

"He has two pals somewhere about the place," said Carter, "and if we miss capturing him he will give the alarm and the whole shooting match will get away from us."

"Don't worry. I won't miss capturing him."

"Very well, then; try it."

By this time the horseman had come quite close to the three men who were waiting.

As the beats of the horse's hoofs grew louder and clearer, Peabody crept forward to the edge of the trail, holding a revolver in each hand.

In the moonlight he could see that the approaching rider was indeed Whooping Andy.

When Andy had come close enough, Peabody sprang up in the trail.

So abrupt and unexpected was the sheriff's appearance that the horse reared back on its haunches with a snort of fear and Andy gave vent to a startled exclamation.

"Andy Borden," cried the sheriff, sternly, "you're my prisoner!"

The moonlight gleamed on the officer's revolvers as he gave voice to the words.

Andy saw the leveled weapons, and knew that he was confronted by a man who meant business.

But Andy was tactful, and times out of number he had sworn that he would not be captured alive.

"Well, podner, this is sudden. Do I recognize that

voice of yours, or don't I? Are you the sheriff of Dona Ana County?"

"Yes."

"Didn't I warn you to stay away from here?"

"You may be a big man in your own way, but, by thunder! you don't boss the law of this commonwealth."

"Mebbe I don't," was the sarcastic rejoinder, "but I'm bossin' the sheriff an' don't you fergit that fer a moment. What are you tryin' to do?"

"You're my prisoner!"

"I have my doubts about that. What do ye want to arrest me for?"

"For robbin' a Texas bank."

"That's out of your jurisdiction, ole man."

"No more chinning! Get off that horse."

"Certainly."

Whooping Andy did get off his horse, but he got off in such a way that he took the sheriff by complete surprise.

With an ease and agility that were certainly wonderful, he shot from his horse's back straight at the form in the trail.

Striking Peabody "broadside on," he toppled him over as though he had been a tenpin in a bowling alley.

The officer had no chance to use his weapons, and the bank robber, with the quickness of a tiger cat, developed a knife, and would have sunk it to the hilt in his antagonist's breast.

The instant the blade fell, however, Peabody moved sidewise, and the keen steel passed into his arm.

At this juncture, Carter leaped out of the bushes.

"You have another to settle with," hissed Carter.

"Great blazes! I thought you were in that cyanide vat."

"So I would have been had you had your way. Surrender, Andy Borden, or, by Heaven! I'll shoot you where you stand!"

Whooping Andy seemed as though made of India rubber.

His every move was made with wonderful rapidity, and he bounded about as though propelled by powerful springs.

Even though the detective had a revolver in his hand, Andy reached and grappled with him before he could shoot.

For an instant the men struggled fiercely, and then

Bordon demonstrated his wonderful skill in wrestling by tossing Carter clear over his head.

The detective fell heavily on the rocks and lay where he had fallen, like a dead man.

Then Bertie stepped into the path, throwing off his coat as he did so.

"Once more, Whooping Andy," said the youth, quietly. "You're chain lightning itself, your knife play is simply superb, and at Greco-Roman you're a star of the first magnitude—but I've planted myself in your path to freedom."

Whooping Andy looked our hero over very much as a big Brahma fighting cock would size up a bantam.

"I don't want to hurt you, youngster. Stand aside or ye'll git smashed."

"Who'll smash me?"

"I will!"

Thud!

Diamond Dick, Jr., darted forward, his fists cut a figure eight in the air for a moment, and then he landed on the side of Andy's neck and darted back unscathed by the robber's big knuckles.

"Bustin' glory!" growled Andy. "I wouldn't have believed it—dashed if I would. Who are you?"

"Diamond Dick, Jr."

"Then you are my victim. Lookout for yourself!"

He made a rush at Bertie.

The youth suddenly dropped to a stooping posture, ran to one side of Whooping Andy and tripped him up in a manner that was beautiful to see.

The bank thief and all around bad man turned a complete somersault and alighted on his back.

He lay for several seconds as he had fallen.

"Come," said Bertie, rolling up his sleeves, "nothing short of a knockout is going to satisfy me. There's a dose in store for you and take it you've got to."

"Young feller," returned Whooping Andy, springing up, "you've signed your death warrant. All that remains is fer me to execute it. If you want anythin' pretty put on yer headstone jest mention it."

"I'm not going to be planted yet a while," replied Bertie.

"We'll see about that."

Andy advanced warily to the combat this time.

The moonlight shone full on the youth, and he could observe his slightest movement.

Arriving within arm's length, Andy reached over with one of his big fists; Bertie dodged; Andy's

other fist cleaved the air with a force of a plie driver; Bertie would have dodged again, but his foot slipped, and the robber's bony knuckles caught him in the shoulder.

Bertie was whirled half around, and almost knocked off his feet.

Seeing his advantage, Andy pressed forward.

It took our hero but a moment to recover his equilibrium, and then he halted in the retreat he had begun and waited.

Sure of an easy victory, Andy rolled toward him to give him a settling tap.

The big fist swung round in a circle—but it met no resistance, and Andy lost his balance.

Before he could recover himself, Bertie planted four blows in quick succession upon his face and forehead.

It was a knockout, and a "prize" knockout at that.

Andy went down like a steer.

"Time!" called out Carter, limping back into the trail.

There was no move on the part of the stricken Andy.

"Diamond Dick, Jr.," said Carter, "you're the winner; and it was as pretty a piece of fist-play as I ever saw in my life!"

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"He came within an ace of doing me!" returned Bertie.

"That was when your foot slipped," spoke up Peabody, appearing on the scene.

He had wrapped a handkerchief about his wounded arm.

"Are you badly hurt, Peabody?" asked Bertie.

"That knife went through the fleshy part of my arm, but it did no damage beyond letting a little blood, I take it."

"Have you a rope, Carter?"

"Something better than a rope," and the detective drew from his pocket a pair of jingling handcuffs.

"Right you are," said Bertie; "get them on our friend without delay, and gag him, too."

"Why gag him?" asked Peabody.

"So he won't be able to yell and warn his two pals."

"That's so," said the sheriff. "I had thought of that."

Whooping Andy was made secure with both wrist and ankle irons.

"Now, Peabody," said Bertie, "we'll let you guard Andy while Carter and I go after the rest of the all-star combination."

"That's about all I'm good for, with this arm."

Without delay, Carter and Bertie started toward the Bonanza buildings.

"Diamond Dick, Jr.," said Carter, in a low voice, as they made their way toward the large building that had been used as a boarding house in the days when the Bonanza had been in full blast, "I suppose you know that there is a big reward out for these bank robbers?"

"Yes."

"I propose to share that with you."

"You needn't," said Bertie, a little sharply. "I follow this life because I like it—not for what there is in it."

"You mean that I am to keep all the reward myself?"

"No; you ought to give Peabody five thousand dollars of it. He's liable to have trouble with that arm."

"I'll do it! But it seems to me that you ought to have——"

"Say no more about it. We haven't captured our men yet."

"Whooping Andy was the worst of the three."

"Nonsense! Whooping Andy is nothing more nor less than a human bulldog. Tony Turner and Hal Porter are head and shoulders above him in cunning and shrewdness."

"Perhaps you're right."

"I know I am; and we may have trouble yet in running down the rest of that quartett."

"I never thought we'd have such a time as this, the day I met you on the *Texas Belle* and asked your assistance."

"And I never thought I'd be put on my mettle as I have been by this set of crooks. But it's all right. I'd rather have a game of hares-and-hounds with a shrewd thief than with a dull one."

"You're a peculiar fellow."

"I love the excitement."

"You seem to be always successful."

"That's because I follow the work for its own sake and not for the money there is to made. Let us stop

here, in the shadow of these cyanide vats, and watch that house for a few moments. I have an idea."

"What's that?"

"Some one may come out here to see how that cyanide solution is taking effect on you."

"That's more than possible."

"While we are waiting, tell me about the robbery of the Consolidated National."

"It was a decidedly clever piece of work."

"It must have been, if this combination of crooks had anything to do with it."

"You see, the Consolidated National occupies the main floor of a very large building."

"There is a basement underneath that occupied by a cigar dealer. The brick work upon which the bank vaults rest runs down into this basement and rests on a concrete foundation."

"A week before the robbery Tony Turner and Andy Borden came around and bought out the cigar dealer."

"The crooks sailed under assumed names, of course. No sooner had they acquired possession of the business than they discharged the two cigar makers and hired two others. The two men whom they ostensibly hired were Hal Porter and Bug Williams, the fellow you captured and jailed in Houston."

"The combination now had everything their own way."

"They were sole possessors of the basement, and had the vaults to work on at their leisure."

"They began systematically to tunnel upward."

"Day and night they carried on their operations."

"When they reached the steel lining of the vault they sawed through it and stole a large amount of new banknotes which had only just been received and signed."

"It was that money, undoubtedly, that you saw taken from the pommel of Andy's saddle."

"No doubt of it."

"I also saw Andy playing poker with some of that money in the Happy Heathen—that's what led me to suspect him of being one of the all-star combination."

"He used that money to gamble with?"

"Yes."

"No wonder he gave himself away. I cannot understand why he should do such a foolish thing."

"That's why I told you that the other three members of the gang were head and shoulders above him,

so far as cunning and diplomacy are concerned. Andy is nothing but a bluffer and a bruiser."

"Hist! here comes one of the others."

A dark form was seen walking toward the cyanide vats.

As the form approached, Bertie and the detective moved around behind the vat.

The man was Tony Turner.

The detective recognized him as he came closer.

"How shall we go about it to nab him?" whispered Carter; "he'll make a desperate stand."

"Leave everything to me," answered Bertie, "and I'll capture him in such a way that he won't have a chance to make a fuss or alarm the other crook who must be around here somewhere."

The youth and the detective were hiding behind the vat in which the latter had been tied. At the side of the tank was a short ladder so that one could ascend and look over the top.

Entirely unsuspecting of trouble, Turner mounted this ladder.

He had barely reached the top of it when Diamond Dick, Jr., rushed forward and pulled it from under him.

The result was that the crook was thrown to the ground with such violence as to bewilder and partially stun him.

Before he had recovered himself, Bertie had a knee on his breast and a tight grip about his windpipe.

"Something to secure this fellow with," said Bertie; "quick!"

"I'm out of handcuffs."

"Then find a rope."

Setting the ladder against the tank once more, Carter ascended it and fished out the rope with which he had been tied.

A portion of this rope was used in making Turner secure.

"Now," said Bertie, after Turner had been gagged, "you watch this man and I will go and find Porter."

"I can just as well go with you, if you think you will need me."

"No; you stay here. There's no telling what this fellow may try to do."

Bertie then walked slowly toward the house.

Through one of the unglazed openings that admitted light and air, there shone a light.

He advanced to this opening and looked into the house.

Porter was sitting at a table, his head lying in his arms upon it.

"Asleep!" muttered Bertie; "the last of the combination will prove an easy capture, or I am very much mistaken."

It required but a moment to open the door noiselessly and walk into the room.

Porter never moved.

Drawing his guns, Bertie seated himself on the other side of the table.

"Porter!" he called.

The bank robber did not move.

Again the youth called his name.

Still no answer.

Stepping to the man's side, Bertie threw his head back.

"Washer want?" hiccupped Porter. "Cansher leaver feller lone—hic!—when he's all tired out?"

That settled it—Porter was drunk.

Had his faculties been unclouded by liquor, there is no telling how hard a task Bertie would have had in capturing him.

Our hero gave a sigh of relief, for a load had been suddenly taken off his shoulders.

"This man was the hardest of the combination to capture," muttered the youth; "but he came last and easiest."

A few words more and our story is told.

With the capture of Hal Porter our hero felt that his work was done.

Porter was the man who had defeated and baffled him many times, and who had finally "put him on his mettle." Now that he was captured, Bertie felt that he could sever his connection with the case.

That night Andy, Turner and Porter were taken to Las Cruces and placed in the jail for safekeeping.

The Governor of Texas finally made a request on the Governor of New Mexico for the men, and Carter started back with them.

They were ultimately tried, convicted and given long terms in the penitentiary.

At the last moment Bug Williams turned State's evidence, but it only lightened his sentence for a year or so, as the prosecution had a strong enough case without any further evidence from one of the "combination."

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 296) will contain, "Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Run of Luck; or, The Twist-Up at Terrible."

Diamond Dick, Jr., did not return to Texas; he found work for himself in his own peculiar line in New Mexico.

It was an interesting and peculiar affair which he was next called upon to face, and the story will be told in the next issue of this library.



A hot contest and no mistake. Don't let up for a minute. Keep it humming. You all know all about it, and the prizes we are offering, of course. Just look on page 31 if you think you need to refresh your memory.

An Adventure with a Bull.

(By Bruce Truman, Ia.)

One bright sunny day as Jack Sewall and Walter Thompson were returning from an afternoon's fishing, in order that they might get home sooner, they went through a pasture owned by a farmer called Simpson.

They were chatting gayly and admiring their nice string of fish when they heard a bellow of rage, and on turning they saw a mad bull coming upon them.

"Simpson's mad bull," exclaimed Walter.

"It is your red necktie. Jack, take it off!"

By this time the bull was upon them and by artful dodging they managed to keep out of the bull's way.

"Go for help, Jack. I'll manage the bull," exclaimed Walter.

He then ran straight at the bull, who stood still, pawing and tearing the earth.

The bull was taken aback at the strange turn of affairs.

Suddenly he came at Walter with the fury of a cyclone. Walter dodged and the bull turned and made after him again. Just then he heard a shot and the bull stumbled to the earth. Another shot and he lay dead at Walter's feet. Then Mr. Simpson and Jack hurried up and found Walter nearly faint from running.

Mr. Simpson pointed to Walter's red handkerchief, which hung from his pocket and said:

"That's what caused most of the trouble, boy. I might have saved my bull if it hadn't been for that."

The Moonshiner's Daughter.

(By L. S. Cramer, N. Y.)

Jeb Haskins and his son Jack and daughter Molly lived in a cabin a few miles from Covington, Kentucky.

Jeb was a "moonshiner," making illicit whisky, but nestled in the mountains, he fancied he would be beyond the reach of revenue officers.

One day a stranger was seen coming down the road, and Jack and his father walked down the road to meet him.

When they came up to the stranger he asked: "Does Jeb Haskins live hereabouts?"

"Wa'll, that's me, and what do you want with me?" said the old man.

"I have come to arrest you on a charge of making illicit liquor," answered the revenue officer, for such he

was, at the same time developing a brace of pistols. "Now, come with me."

"Not by a damned sight; you'un don't git me," and with that the old man fired at the detective, Frank Marsh.

The shot grazed his temple, and stunned him, and the father and son carried him back the road to their hut, where they then proceeded to bind him.

"Oh! our house is on fire! My God! a man calling for help. Can it be father or Jack?"

Mollie Haskins was returning from the village, where she had been to buy some provisions, when she discovered the cabin afire.

Rushing into the room which was filled with smoke, she beheld a man bound to the fireplace with a cord and an old iron chain.

Taking a knife from her pocket she had quickly cut the cords; then she unhooked the chain.

Frank Marsh, the detective, and the girl groped their way to the door, and a minute later the house fell.

Four years have passed and Mollie Haskins is Mrs. Frank Marsh.

Her father is now out of prison, where he was sent soon after the detective's escape from the fire.

There are two children born to the Marshes, and they are both contented, yet they never forget the terrible time which Frank put in in the blazing house.

My Experience with a Burglar.

(By Louis B. Rosselle, Fla.)

One Saturday I thought I would go and stay with my cousin. Well, it happened that I got lost on the way. So I was pretty well scared up when I got there. We all retired early for the night. I woke up during the night and looked at the window, which was open, and, much to my surprise, I saw a man with a pistol pointed at my head. I didn't know what to do, whether to shout or not. I just slipped out in the kitchen and got a poker and threw it at him. He was so surprised that he turned and ran.

It happened that some one came down from upstairs and saw the burglar running and darted after him and caught him. He had just finished robbing the house next door. They got all the valuables back. The burglar was sentenced to a long term in the State's Prison.



THE COWARD.

He was the man who came last to ship as seaman aboard the *Warrior* as she lay in the harbor. A fine two-masted schooner was the vessel, and Captain Scudder was properly proud of her as she lay alongside the wharf, receiving cargo and passengers. She was to sail with twenty souls upon her—seventeen men, two women, and a lady's maid. At the last moment the captain decided to augment his crew by one man more. Ere he made a move to engage one he heard a man's voice saying:

"Please tell me where the captain is?"

He turned and faced the speaker, who was a tall, gaunt fellow of thirty years or thereabouts, with such diffidence of manner as required some courage in him to look the captain squarely in the face when the latter gruffly said:

"I'm the captain."

The man stood still, in an awkward attitude, under the captain's stern gaze, as if unable to find speech before so fierce a glance. He dropped his dull gray eyes to the deck and doffed his now shapeless hat, and spoke, after a gulp, in a low voice that slightly trembled:

"If you please, may I work my passage out?"

The captain was moved by this speech to a faint facial demonstration of amusement. A pretty sailor this big, shame-faced man would make! The captain studied the applicant's appearance in detail. A homely fellow he was, with an unhealthy brown hue to his skin, a forehead into which some lines of sorrow had been wrought, roving eyes that met one's glance with a slightly startled look, a haggard face without whiskers, a receding chin, bent shoulders, and a graceless way of wearing his faded and frayed attire. Red hands and long wrists protruded from the two short sleeves of his worn-out blouse.

"What do you know about sailing?" asked the captain, in a tone of ridicule.

"Not much, sir. I've worked with fishermen, and I know a little about handling a smack."

"I reckon we don't need you. Ever been on a schooner before at all?"

"Often as a passenger, sir. I know I'm not a seaman, but I'll do anything. I want to get back to my people."

"You look strong enough; but why do you hang your head like that? One would think you were a coward."

"I am," said the man, in a low voice.

"What! and you admit it?"

"Yes. Why not? I've fought hard against it, but I

can't help it. I make up my mind to be brave enough, but when the time comes for it I'm afraid!"

The captain had never met such a character as this before, and he was interested.

A few other loungers on the wharf stopped to overhear the conversation, their attention first attracted by the great height of the man.

"Afraid of what?" asked the captain.

"I don't know. Of death, I suppose. This is how it is. I came from home with a comrade, I go back alone. One day, when we were out in a little sloop a storm came up, and in a sudden lurch of the boat my partner was knocked overboard by the boom. In half a minute the boat was several fathoms away from him. He couldn't swim."

"Why didn't you throw him a line?" asked a bystander.

"Because I was afraid for my own coward's life! I didn't dare to let go the tiller for an instant, afraid of death. I felt like a man paralyzed. As the boat rose and fell on the waves I watched my friend struggle in the sea. I saw him throw up his arms; I saw his face white with terror; I heard him cry out, 'Save me!' and then he must have read what was in my scared face, for he shouted, 'Coward!' and sent me a look of hate as the waters covered him up. I don't know how I made land, but I got in safe, after six hours of tossing, when the gale fell. I'd give my life, if I only could, to know that I wasn't a coward, but when the time comes to show it I haven't the power. You don't know the shame of it, sir; but you would if you could see that look on my comrade's face, and if his cry rang in your ears day and night. Cowardice is upon me like a curse. It's the blight of my life, sir."

Such evident shame and grief were upon the man's face that all who heard, including the captain, were moved to some pity of his state, and so much curiosity had he excited in the captain's mind that he was employed for the voyage.

When the *Warrior* hoisted sail an hour later she had twenty-one souls aboard.

The captain classified them thus: Seventeen men, two ladies, a maid, and a coward.

The *Warrior* had good winds at the start of her voyage. But one night a wind rose, and at daylight there was a heavy gale. Whitecaps danced wildly upon the waters of the sound. The perturbation of the sea was

becoming frightful. The vessel was driving straight on to a rocky coast. The passengers, pale with dread of the coming catastrophe, lashed themselves to the deck or clung to the rigging. Captain Scudder shouted the warning of the doom of the Warrior above the sound sea.

"Nothing under heaven can change her course!"

Yet he and his crew strove, nevertheless, to the last. Everybody on board knew that the vessel was drifting rapidly, that soon she must strike and be dashed to pieces.

The sea swept her deck and broke over her masts. Seven men hung to the rigging for life. They looked ashore. Only one hundred and fifty yards away stood a group of islanders, as helpless to succor those in peril as the latter were to save themselves.

Now the position of the vessel was this. Where Sandy Point drops beneath the sea, it does not end, but it is prolonged under the water, making thus a perilous sandbar. Out upon this bar was the Warrior. The island tide from the east and that from the west meet here. There is no more terrible place in a gale than that where two seas collide.

The storm grew. Such was the work of wind and sea that times were when the sandbar from the shore to the vessel was swept naked. But its nudity was speedily buried under the heavier seas. Passengers and crew, fatigued with labor and loss of sleep, assailed by a biting wind, at last succumbed to chill and numbness, and made no more effort.

Then arose one of their number, a tall, gaunt fellow whom the captain had called a coward in harbor, and he proceeded to belabor them and to keep them active that they might not perish from the cold.

"There's hope yet!" he cried. "Keep alive, men!"

And one after another did he awaken by rude shaking, and warm by his rough chaffings. Some caught this spirit, and by the labors of their weary muscles set their frozen blood in quicker motion.

"But what use?" cried one. "The end must come."

"Ay, but there's one chance," shouted the coward, who now loomed up large and resolute. "Look! the sea has rolled back and left the bar uncovered. A man could run ashore on that, maybe, while the sea held back."

Two men laughed madly.

"Ay, maybe! Look now!" said one, with savage sarcasm.

The coward looked. The sea had swelled up and hidden the bar far beneath its foaming waters.

"Yet one might try!" cried the coward.

"Try you, then," shouted the other.

Now it is hard to meet death half way. It is against man's nature to walk to destruction. Even though he know it he is coming, he has the hope or the cowardice to shrink from it to the last. Therefore, no sailor of them would leap into that sea or dare the deed suggested by the coward.

"If I succeed, will you follow at the next fall of the sea?" he asked.

"What one man can do, another can," was the reply.

The coward looked ashore. Suddenly the waters rolled apart. The sandbar was naked; the man jumped from the gunwale and ran.

The people on the vessel watched him with waking hope and cessation of breath. The hundreds of islanders

on shore stood silent, thrilled, eager. No word was said; only the sea spoke.

The man ran shoreward, with shoulders and head bent forward and eyes set. The sea rose on both sides of him. Two huge waves walled his roadway.

The roadway began to narrow. A turbulent high sea moved in pursuit of him. He lengthened and quickened his steps. It was a race between so small a thing as a man, and so great a thing as the storm-impelled ocean.

The ocean won. With a great roar, it came down upon the man. But he would not be taken in flank, with his back to his enemy. He turned and faced the sea. He leaped into it headforemost. Afterward his body was cast upon the beach. The ocean had toyed with it and had then thrown it back to its own kind.

Those on the island saw that when the man turned to meet death a smile was on his face. He had discovered that he was not afraid to die.

Dead on the Post of Duty.

(By Eric Harold Palmer.)

When the palatial residence of Major Wharton caught fire, the flames spread with startling rapidity. As it was early in the morning all the inmates except the servants were asleep. The servants, detecting the smoke and hearing the ominous roar of the fire, rushed panic-stricken out of the house, screaming, and managed to gasp out to a nearby policeman an exaggerated account of the circumstances. The officer hurriedly turned in an alarm and darted toward the major's home, rapping for assistance. He rushed into the hall, but had not gone far before he was driven back by the onrushing flames. He heard screams. With a deep sense of duty, the officer, guarding his face as well as possible, rushed up the stairs, shouting at the top of his voice. He found no one on the second floor, and knew that the bedrooms of the major and his wife and their two daughters were on the floor above. How could he reach them? He was surrounded by fire and smoke; his uniform and face were burned; the stairs were on fire, and he did not know which way to turn.

When the engines arrived the house was a mass of flame. The hose was quickly run out, and steady streams of water were soon at work. The ladders were placed, and three brave firemen climbed up, to disappear on the third floor. Two minutes later they returned, carrying Mrs. Wharton and her two daughters. Two climbed up again, for the purpose of saving the major. Long minutes passed, but they did not reappear. Their comrades waited anxiously, and were preparing to go to the rescue, when the walls of the house fell with a loud crash. The next day the remains of four men were found. One was Major Wharton, two were firemen, one was a policeman. The three last named had died in doing their duty. Why say more?

"Regrets and tears for some lost scene of beauty,
But not for the brave, who died for their duty;
For they come not back again."



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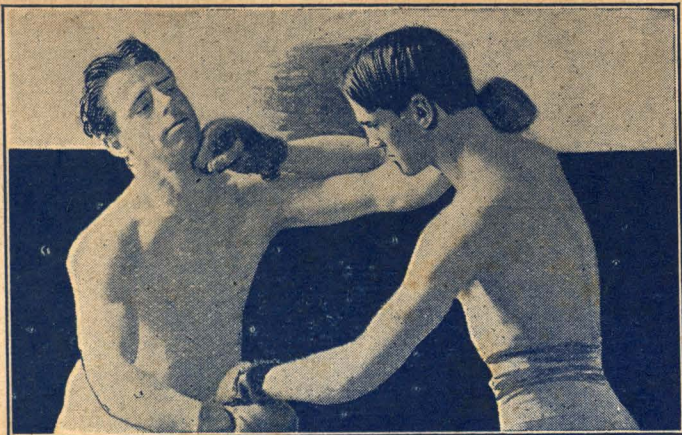
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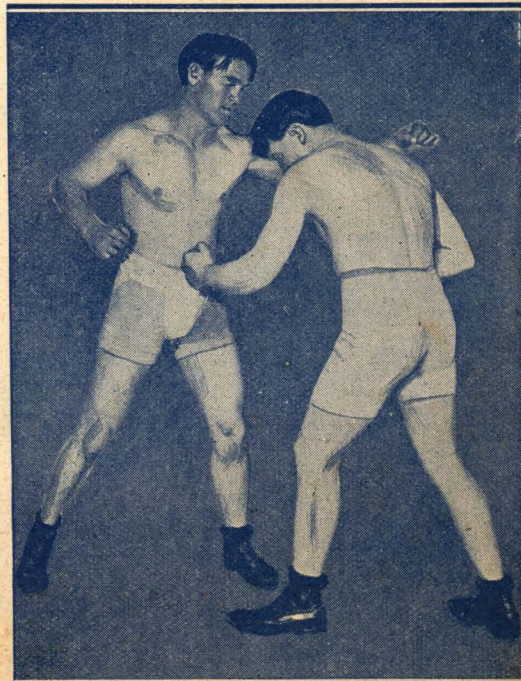
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